

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
WACO DIVISION**

DENISE JONES,

Plaintiff,

v.

CONVERGENT OUTSOURCING, INC.,

Defendant.

CIVIL COMPLAINT

CASE NO. 6:20-cv-00434

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

COMPLAINT

NOW comes DENISE JONES (“Plaintiff”), by and through her attorneys, Sulaiman Law Group, Ltd. (“Sulaiman”), complaining as to the conduct of CONVERGENT OUTSOURCING, INC. (“Defendant”), as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. Plaintiff brings this action for damages pursuant to the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (“FDCPA”) under 15 U.S.C. §1692 *et seq.* and the Texas Debt Collection Act (“TDCA”) pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392, for Defendant’s unlawful conduct.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This action arises under and is brought pursuant to the FDCPA. Subject matter jurisdiction is conferred upon this Court by 15 U.S.C §1692, 28 U.S.C. §§1331 and 1337, as the action arises under the laws of the United States. Supplemental jurisdiction exists for the state law claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1367.

3. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1391 as Defendant conducts business in the Western District of Texas a subtotal portion of the events that gave rise to this action occurred within the Western District of Texas.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff is a consumer over 18 years-of-age residing within the Western District of Texas.

5. Defendant is a debt collection agency with its principal place of business located at 800 SW 39th Street, Suite 100, Renton, Washington 98057. Defendant regularly collects upon consumers located in the state of Texas.

6. Defendant acted through its agents, employees, officers, members, directors, heirs, successors, assigns, principals, trustees, sureties, subrogees, third-party contractors, representatives and insurers at all times relevant to the instant action.

FACTS SUPPORTING CAUSES OF ACTION

7. The instant action arises out of Defendant's attempts to collect upon an outstanding student debt ("subject debt") that Plaintiff allegedly owed.

8. Around September 2019, Plaintiff began receiving calls to her cellular phone, (509) XXX-3866, from Defendant.

9. At all times relevant to the instant action, Plaintiff was the sole subscriber, owner, and operator of the cellular phone ending in -3866. Plaintiff is and always has been financially responsible for the cellular phone and its services.

10. Defendant has used several phone numbers when placing calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone, including but not limited to: (206) 426-1092, (206) 426-1226, and (206) 426-1535.

11. Upon information and belief, the above-referenced phone numbers are regularly utilized by Defendant during its debt collection activity.

12. Upon answering phone calls from Defendant, Plaintiff has experienced a significant pause, lasting several seconds in length, before being connected with a live representative.

13. Plaintiff, through her contacts with Defendant, was informed that Defendant was acting as a debt collector attempting to collect upon the subject debt.

14. Defendant's frequent and consistent collection calls caused Plaintiff to demand that it cease calling her cellular phone.

15. Defendant willfully ignored Plaintiff's demand and continued placing phone calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone.

16. Defendant's harassing collection calls to Plaintiff's cellular telephone were particularly inconvenient to Plaintiff because she is a truck driver and needs her phone in order receive calls from brokers in order to direct her to her stops.

17. Defendant's harassing collection calls to Plaintiff's cellular telephone interfered with Plaintiff's ability to work.

18. Despite Plaintiff's efforts, Defendant has continued to regularly call her cellular phone up until the filing of this lawsuit.

19. Defendant has also placed multiple calls to Plaintiff's cellular phone during the same day, even after being notified to stop.

20. Plaintiff has received hundreds of phone calls from Defendant since asking it to stop calling.

21. Frustrated over Defendant's conduct, Plaintiff spoke with Sulaiman regarding her rights, resulting in exhausting time and resources.

22. Plaintiff has been unfairly and unnecessarily harassed by Defendant's actions.

23. Plaintiff has suffered concrete harm as a result of Defendant's actions, including but not limited to, invasion of privacy, aggravation that accompanies collection telephone calls, emotional distress, increased risk of personal injury resulting from the distraction caused by the never-ending calls, interfering with Plaintiff's ability to work, increased usage of her telephone services, loss of cellular phone capacity, diminished cellular phone functionality, decreased battery life on her cellular phone, and diminished space for data storage on her cellular phone.

COUNT I – VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

24. Plaintiff repeats and realleges paragraphs 1 through 23 as though full set forth herein.

25. Plaintiff is a "consumer" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(3) of the FDCPA.

26. Defendant is a "debt collector" as defined by §1692a(6) of the FDCPA, because it regularly use the mail and/or the telephone to collect, or attempt to collect, delinquent consumer accounts.

27. Defendant is engaged in the business of collecting or attempting to collect, directly or indirectly, defaulted debts owed or due or asserted to be owed or due to others. Defendant identifies itself as a debt collector and has been a member of the ACA, an association of debt collectors, since 1954.¹

28. The subject debt is a "debt" as defined by FDCPA §1692a(5) as it arises out of a transaction due or asserted to be owed or due to another for personal, family, or household purposes.

a. Violations of FDCPA §1692c(a)(1) and §1692d

29. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692d, prohibits a debt collector from engaging "in any conduct the natural consequence of which is to harass, oppress, or abuse any person in

¹ <http://www.acainternational.org/search#memberdirectory>

connection with the collection of a debt.” §1692d(5) further prohibits, “causing a telephone to ring or engaging any person in telephone conversation repeatedly or continuously with intent to annoy, abuse, or harass any person at the called number.”

30. Defendant violated §1692c(a)(1), d, and d(5) when it repeatedly called Plaintiff after being notified to stop. Defendant called Plaintiff numerous times after she demanded that it stop calling. This repeated behavior of systematically calling Plaintiff’s cellular phone in spite of Plaintiff’s demands was harassing and abusive. The frequency and nature of calls shows that Defendant willfully ignored Plaintiff’s pleas with the goal of annoying and harassing her.

31. Defendant was notified by Plaintiff that its calls were not welcomed. Furthermore, Defendant consistently called Plaintiff while she was working causing a great amount of distraction. As such, Defendant knew that its conduct was inconvenient and harassing to Plaintiff.

b. Violations of FDCPA § 1692e

32. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, prohibits a debt collector from using “any false, deceptive, or misleading representation or means in connection with the collection of any debt.”

33. In addition, this section enumerates specific violations, such as:

“The use of any false representation or deceptive means to collect or attempt to collect any debt or to obtain information concerning a consumer.” 15 U.S.C. §1692e(10).

34. Defendant violated §1692e and e(10) when it used deceptive means to collect and/or attempt to collect the subject debt. In spite of the fact that Plaintiff demanded that it stop contacting her Defendant continued to contact Plaintiff via automated calls. Instead of putting an end to this harassing behavior, Defendant systematically placed calls to Plaintiff’s cellular phone in a deceptive attempt to force her to answer its calls and ultimately make a payment. Through its

conduct, Defendant misleadingly represented to Plaintiff that it had the legal ability to contact her via an automated system when it no longer had consent to do so.

c. Violations of FDCPA § 1692f

35. The FDCPA, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692f, prohibits a debt collector from using “unfair or unconscionable means to collect or attempt to collect any debt.”

36. Defendant violated §1692f when it unfairly and unconscionably attempted to collect on the subject debt by continuously calling Plaintiff numerous times after being notified to stop. Attempting to coerce Plaintiff into payment by placing voluminous phone calls without her permission is unfair and unconscionable behavior. These means employed by Defendant only served to worry and confuse Plaintiff.

37. As pled in paragraphs 21 through 23, Plaintiff has been harmed and suffered damages as a result of Defendant’s illegal actions.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, DENISE JONES, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned bodies of law;
- b. Awarding Plaintiff statutory damages of \$1,000.00 as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(2)(A);
- c. Awarding Plaintiff actual damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(1);
- d. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees as provided under 15 U.S.C. §1692k(a)(3);
- e. Enjoining Defendant from further contacting Plaintiff seeking payment of the subject debt; and
- f. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

COUNT II – VIOLATIONS OF THE TEXAS DEBT COLLECTION ACT

38. Plaintiff restates and realleges paragraphs 1 through 37 as though fully set forth herein.

39. Plaintiff is a “consumer” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(1).

40. Defendant is a “debt collector” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(6).

41. The subject debt is a “consumer debt” as defined by Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.001(2) as it is an obligation, or alleged obligation, arising from a transaction for personal, family, or household purposes.

a. Violations of TDCA § 392.302

42. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.302(4), states that “a debt collector may not oppress, harass, or abuse a person by causing a telephone to ring repeatedly or continuously, or making repeated or continuous telephone calls, with the intent to harass a person at the called number.”

43. Defendant violated the TDCA when it continued to call Plaintiff’s cellular phone numerous after she notified it to stop calling. The repeated contacts were made with the hope that Plaintiff would succumb to the harassing behavior and ultimately submit a payment. Rather than understanding Plaintiff’s situation and abiding by her wishes, Defendant continued in its harassing campaign of phone calls in hopes of extracting payment.

b. Violations of TDCA § 392.304

44. The TDCA, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.304(19) prohibits a debt collector from “using any . . . false representation or deceptive means to collect a debt or obtain information concerning a consumer.”

45. Defendant violated the TDCA through the implicit misrepresentations made on phone calls placed to Plaintiff’s cellular phone. Through its conduct, Defendant misleadingly represented to Plaintiff that it had the lawful ability to continue contacting her cellular phone

using an automated system absent her consent. Such lawful ability was revoked upon Plaintiff demanding that Defendant stop calling her cellular phone, illustrating the deceptive nature of Defendant's conduct.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, DENISE JONES, respectfully requests that this Honorable Court enter judgment in her favor as follows:

- a. Declaring that the practices complained of herein are unlawful and violate the aforementioned statutes and regulations;
- b. Entitling Plaintiff to injunctive relief pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(1);
- c. Awarding Plaintiff actual damages, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(a)(2);
- d. Awarding Plaintiff punitive damages, in an amount to be determined at trial, for the underlying violations;
- e. Awarding Plaintiff costs and reasonable attorney fees, pursuant to Tex. Fin. Code Ann. § 392.403(b);
- f. Enjoining Defendant from further contacting Plaintiff seeking payment of the subject debt; and
- g. Awarding any other relief as this Honorable Court deems just and appropriate.

Dated: May 28, 2020

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Nathan C. Volheim (Lead Attorney)
Nathan C. Volheim, Esq. #6302103
Counsel for Plaintiff
Admitted in the Western District of Texas
Sulaiman Law Group, Ltd.
2500 South Highland Ave., Suite 200
Lombard, Illinois 60148
(630) 568-3056 (phone)
(630) 575-8188 (fax)
nvolheim@sulaimanlaw.com

s/Taxiarchis Hatzidimitriadis
Taxiarchis Hatzidimitriadis, Esq. #6319225
Counsel for Plaintiff
Admitted in the Western District of Texas
Sulaiman Law Group, Ltd.
2500 South Highland Ave., Suite 200
Lombard, Illinois 60148
(630) 581-5858 (phone)
(630) 575-8188 (fax)
thatz@sulaimanlaw.com